



21 DAY DEVOTIONAL

DAY ONE

“New Year, New Me”

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-14

It is normal with the start of a new year to consider what our goals will be; what changes we want to make or improve in our current circumstances. This can be across our marriage, family, ministry, work and friends. However, with that challenge to “improve” – there can often be a self-focus – a striving.

In this passage, Ezekiel is given a vision of what scholars believe is the aftermath of a battle – a valley of dry bones – death has come, time has passed and by the time your bones are dry – life has certainly passed. Ain’t no coming back from those dry bones!

BUT! The Lord (Yahweh) says to Ezekiel to “speak a prophetic message” (v4,9 NLT). Speak is the verb -the instruction - to use his own “God-given” breath, the (fresh) air that was within him, to prophesy to the dry bones!

Interestingly, the prophetic message was also about breath. The Hebrew word in this passage is “ruakh,” which can mean “breath”, “wind” or “Spirit” depending on the context. In Ezekiel 37:14 God promises to put His Spirit in His people.

After the first prophetic message that the breath of the Lord would come to the bones, there was rattling and movement as they clamored together. The skeletons formed, the muscles formed, and the skin covered the body but they still were dead bodies lying on the ground.

There was a second prophetic message needed to again bring the breath of the Lord to the bodies. Now we had action! It was a great army – giving us the picture of health, vitality, strength, and united purpose for the greater good.

“This was a work of revival; restoring life to something that at one time had life. This was not the creation of life from nothing; it was the restoration of life to something that had been long dead.” David Guzik

When considering this New Year, don't strive to “be better.” True life fulfillment comes through our relationship with God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and The Holy Spirit. Let the ‘New Year, New Me’ be about speaking to those dry parts of your life - that the Holy Spirit will come in and not just give you the shell of what your life should look like, but keep asking the Holy Spirit to be in all aspects of your life so you are living a fully engaged, purpose driven, life giving, God fearing walk.

Prayer: Lord, where I feel my life has perished away or is dry with Your Spirit, I again ask the Holy Spirit to come and breathe in these areas. Let 2019 not be a year of striving or just surviving, but of walking in Your favour and grace.

DAY TWO

The Cry We Hold Our Breath For

Scripture: Job 14:5

A baby's first cry is significant. The congratulations and cheers don't start until the newborn is squawking. It's the only time we LOVE a good, throaty cry! This cry signifies the transition of the fetal circulation and breathing mechanism to normal circulation and breathing. The crying fills the lungs, clears the passages of any residual amniotic fluid and is an indicator of health.

At the end of life, this is also signified by the absence of breath. The last gasp or last breath is how we mention someone's passing.

Just as God gave us our potential to have breath at conception, we know that He has also determined that there will be a last breath, when we will meet Christ. This scripture reminds us the shortness of life compared to eternity. If breath is our sign of life, how are we honouring God – the giver of life - with our breath? If it is God who gave us breath, shouldn't we speak,

sing, pray, whisper, shout in a way that is a Godly stewardship of that breath that will one day be returned to His custody?

Prayer: Lord, remind me, prompt me, when I am not speaking life to my family, friends, neighbours, and co-workers. Let the fruits of the Spirit be apparent in the words that I speak. Let my voice speak Your truth, wisdom and love.

Reflection: (include song "Into the Deep" Citipointe Live)

DAY THREE

Changing Your Care Factor

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:7

As we meditated yesterday on the reminder to use a Selah time to consider our praise, today we look at the benefits of using our God-given breath to actually lead our body in casting our cares and anxieties on God. "Cast all your cares on Him because He cares for you" (NIV)

Have you noticed that when you are about to endure some pain, whether a medical procedure or exertion in exercise, the professional's advice is to breathe in and then breathe out for the painful part – reducing the intensity of the moment? How incredible is it that God has built in these mechanisms that are available for us to manage and reduce our discomfort!

Intentional breathing and improving breathing techniques is a focus of many professionals, particularly with psychologists to reduce anxiety and stress. The process of taking slower and deeper breaths reduces the rate of the heartbeat, blood pressure and stress hormones.

We can actually use our breathing to cast away our cares. Breathe in His Spirit – slowly and deeply - and breathe out those cares that are keeping you awake at night. Worrying about what might happen will not actually change whether it will happen or not. Our Care Factor has to be in line with His. He cares for us much more than He cares for our circumstance.

Reflection: (Song Elevation Youth: "No Pressure") How can I deliberately breathe and cast my cares?

DAY FOUR

Crave

Scripture: Hebrews 1:3

By this point of the prayer and fasting, if you let your mind go towards what you are fasting, oh the flood of cravings that are going to fill your mind – SO DON'T DO IT!!! Sorry to even introduce the topic to take you there!

That is how powerful our minds are. Mere thoughts can turn into obsessions = CRAVINGS! Our thoughts are that powerful!

This scripture shows how we are sustained by His powerful word. Cravings are normal but are we craving the radiance of God's glory? Are we craving to know Him deeper? Are we craving His presence when we come together to worship? Are we craving to live our lives being Holy Spirit led? Are we craving to share this news of salvation that brings peace and love to our lives to those around us?

Reflection: Let the fast lead you to a focus on craving God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit 24/7. Stir this feeling of craving food to a passion to crave your God.

DAY FIVE

Is Your Air Fresh?

Scripture: Isaiah 12:4, 45:22, Ezekiel 38:23

Remember the Good News version of the Bible? What a great concept that the full story and depth of the God-breathed scriptures be titled "Good News." And it is! Evangelism is simply sharing this Good News.

No matter what season you feel you are in right now, if you are moving through this devotional, you have devotion towards the Lord. Do you remember a time when you didn't have that devotion? The air probably didn't seem so fresh without His presence. Before knowing the Lord, there is no hope, trust or confidence that there is a purpose for our lives and the trials we face.

Your neighbours, your friends, your family, your uni classmates, and your work colleagues are going through the motions of life possibly not even aware that there is another option to their tired, stressed and unfulfilling life.

Is the air around you fresh enough for others to look at you and wonder why it is so fresh? Why you can face the harshness of life with a smile, why you can ride the wave of the ups and downs of life with a smooth resolve, why you can consistently bring good words about those around you and why you are “lucky” in life!? Our lives should exude the goodness of God, the faith and hope of things to come, and His favour in our circumstances.

While our actions are powerful, we should also be compelled to use our breath to bring fresh air to all! Good news to all! Leave others feeling great from their time with you – encouraged, inspired and free!

DAY SIX

Fresh Air Over Australia

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14

Our country is phenomenal! If you have travelled overseas, remember that sense of the first 24 hours back in Australia – the fresh air, the blue skies, the calm that you know the currency, know the food and know your way around. It is the most comforting feeling to be home! We are truly blessed to live in this great country.

And this country right now is not the best it has ever been! There is a general sense of political unrest and a swing away from the moral values that were once considered by many to be the foundations of the society that we have built and relied on. There is a disturbance in the air over Australia. In many respects, Australia is not what it used to be. So what will our response be?

This scripture prompts us to take personal engagement and active responsibility for our land.

- Humble ourselves – don't think that we as Christians know it all and can always out-argue. Humble does not mean to be walked over. It is not passive and non-active, but present and humble!
- Pray – not just through this season of prayer and fasting, but continuously.

- Seek His face – above all – seek Him – not things, not earthly relationships, and not position. Our first pursuit must be to seek Him.
- Turn from our own wicked ways – if you know something is wicked/wrong, stop it! Turn from it! Seek Him instead of this wrong. Let the Holy Spirit help and guide you through. Moral authority comes when we are not duplicitous in our living. Don't talk one way and live another.

Reflection: 2019 – Australia needs some healing – will I play my part in bringing healing to this great country?

DAY SEVEN

Look Up

Scripture Genesis 15:1-6

Abram at this point in scripture is between the promise of an heir and evidence of the miracle. Both Abram and Sarah were aged – things were not looking close to fulfilment. Abram knew it. Sarah knew it. His servants knew it. Abram had tried to resolve the miracle himself with a maid servant. Trying to settle the deal and bring it to fruition.

Then God calls Abram out of his tent. The tent was constraining his vision. He could not be reminded of the promise and be given an even greater promise of the fullness of the heirs to come while he was in the familiar constraints of his tent; while he was with his own thoughts and 'what ifs' and the 'what could have been' scenarios. God called him into the wide, open space to let him feel and experience the greatness of God.

Walking around a city, we can get a false sense of the impressiveness of man's creations: from bridges to towers. Yes, they are amazing. Yet, stand on top of a mountain and see the grandeur of the heavens and land and oceans for as far as the eye can see. The diversity of the animals contained within. The extremes of weather. The force of wind that traces our country. The vision of the stars, the planets and the sun. This is creative genius.

God wants us to take time to absorb His greatness and creativity. Let it help you to lift your eyes! Trust that the promises He has for you are still in the pipeline. Don't let your created world (tent) restrict your vision of what the Lord sees.

Reflection: What dreams and visions do I need to resurrect in 2019? In what areas do I need to look up and see, and take the constraints off my belief?